

Oregon Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Coordinated Messaging Plan

The purpose of this grant was to develop a messaging campaign and communications toolkit that will inspire key audiences to act to reduce the projected trajectory of ocean and climate change and build a more resilient future through OAH mitigation and adaptation planning and policy.

Our original approach suggested conducting a series of workshops with the full OAH Council to co-design the messages and metrics intended for testing with various audiences. The first workshop, conducted in June 2022, was a success. In subsequent conversations with our project contacts at ODFW, however, we came to understand that the time OAH Council members had to dedicate to these workshops was limited and it would be best to shift the approach to shorter, asynchronous opportunities for collecting their input. Hence, we worked with key individuals on specific aspects of the project (audiences, messages, metrics, etc.) then presented information to the entire OAH Council for review and discussion.

We originally planned to present the Communication Plan at an OAH Symposium in April 2024. After it was determined that a live symposium would not take place, it was decided to shift our presentation to May and record it for those who cannot attend.

All of the original deliverables were completed:

- Prioritization of Actions and Audiences
- Creation of Messages and Communications Toolkit
- Development of an Implementation Plan

Through the creation of these materials, we achieved the following outcomes:

- Clearly defined actions that address the human causes of Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Events
- Defined audiences that respond to specific values, sense of community, and emotional investment in their location within the state of Oregon
- 3-5 pilot-tested messages that resonate with the target audiences and have measurable success metrics

- A Communications Toolkit that provides background materials, training outlines and resources, and evaluation tools for measuring successes
- An Implementation Plan that outlines how to roll these messages out locally, regionally and state-wide.

The original proposal suggested that the OAH Council would pilot test training potential "messenger" during using the messages and Toolkit resources; however, with input from ODFW, it was determined that the offering a train-the-trainer resource was a preferred approach.

To achieve these outcomes, we developed and disseminated an online survey with OAH Council and the Education & Outreach Working Group to collect input on initial ideas for the coordinated messaging plan. We then conducted front-end telephone interviews with OAH Council and Education & Outreach Working Group members to further examine perspectives and understand areas of expertise. A virtual workshop with the OAH Council was held to share the results from front-end interviews, introduce council members to communications research, practice strategic framing for climate communication, and explore options for target audiences. We also hosted a follow-up virtual mini-workshop with the OAH Education & Outreach Working Group to offer abbreviated communications training and build off of the OAH Council ideas for identifying key audiences. Using their input, we developed audience profiles and factors to consider in order to objectively determine the best groups to target. We disseminated the online questionnaire to the OAH Council, OAH Education & Outreach Working Group, and Oregon Ocean Policy Advisory Council (OPAC) members, then analyzed the questionnaire results to narrow down the key audiences.

In June 2022, we designed and facilitated a virtual workshop on *Communicating Climate Change Issues* for the OAH Council. A make-up session building on the Council's ideas was held with members of the Education & Outreach Working Group who were unable to attend the initial workshop. In February 2023, a second workshop on *Measuring the Effectiveness of Messaging* was held for the same participants. Materials from these workshops have been included in the final Communication Plan, to provide best practices for communicating about ocean acidification and hypoxia as well as resources for effective science communication tools and techniques and for message evaluation.

During this time we also confirmed the target audiences, developed metrics around those selected audiences, and crafted messages designed to increase the civic readiness of each audience sector.

We completed graphic design of the full Communication Toolkit and Implementation Plan and delivered two virtual workshops: one that describes the Toolkit and one that models a training workshop based on the Implementation Plan. These presentations were attended by 27 and 13 people, respectively, and were recorded for future reference and use by messengers that will be recruited and trained in the future.

Key findings from this project suggested that the audiences in Oregon most primed and suitable for receiving messages about OAH are:

- Harvest Industry (fishermen)
- Seafood Suppliers & Restaurants
- Hospitality Industry - specifically non-chain hoteliers
- Port & County Commissioners

Actions specific to each of these audiences were explored during and after the April 2023 OAH Symposium, when Pathways Collaborative met with individuals representing each audience segment to discuss possible metrics of success and related actions. Input from these interviews confirmed that “civic readiness” is a key outcome of any prioritized actions.

These conversations also revealed a network of individuals within each audience segment who are known and respected messengers in their communities and can serve as end users of the Communication Plan in order to reach and influence policy makers. A key advancement we’ve been able to make is the recognition that raising public awareness of ocean acidification and hypoxia is not by itself an effective outcome of the coordinated messaging plan; rather, we are focusing on communications that will increase civic readiness, such that members of each target audience sector are prepared - when opportunities arise - for legislative and/or community-based action.

House Bill 3114 funded a number of research projects that are advancing the understanding of OAH along Oregon’s coast. This project, rooted in social science, advances the ability of OAH scientists to communicate about their important work. In working to identify key audiences affected by OAH, it was heartening to see how many of these groups are keenly

aware of the issue and impacts. We developed messaging relevant to those target groups in order to communicate effectively about the science behind OAH and solutions to address the impacts on their livelihoods. Many Oregonians seem poised to act in response to the messages.

The creation of an explanatory chain is a proven technique based on the Frameworks Institute approach used for the National Network for Ocean and Climate Change Interpretation (NNOCCI) as part of the methodology for communicating complex issues with the general public. In April 2023, Pathways Collaborative conducted message testing with the general public. Visitors to the Oregon Coast Aquarium were invited to participate in a table-top activity involving statements about ocean acidification and hypoxia. After hearing a brief explanation of the two terms, they were instructed to use the statement cards to assemble their own explanation of ocean acidification and hypoxia. Data collected from this exercise showed that over one third of participants selected the same nine statements. Together, these statements comprise an explanatory chain of ocean acidification and hypoxia that can be delivered in less than one minute and can be comprehended by the majority of public audiences. This clear and concise explanation of the scientific phenomena of ocean acidification and hypoxia is included in the Communication Plan for direct use by those responsible for communicating effectively about these topics.

Members of the OAH Council and the OAH Education & Outreach Working Group were involved as workshop participants, informing each step of the communications toolkit development process. The results of our work with them will enable the OAH Council to prepare and disseminate coordinated messages about ocean acidification and hypoxia to the target audiences and other members of the public.

We expect that the Communication Toolkit and Implementation Plan will be utilized by the OAH Council and its designees to further the civic readiness of Oregonians and influence future legislation around ocean acidification and hypoxia. The usefulness of this project lies in the Implementation Plan being utilized by the OAH Council or its designees.